CLAIMS

1. An image pickup apparatus, comprising:

an image pickup circuit which photoelectrically converts, into pixel signals, a light image formed through a lens; and

a setting controller which sets an image pickup mode selected from among a plurality of image pickup modes,

said plurality of image pickup modes including at least a first mode in which the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit are reduced by extracting pixel signals of a predetermined continuous area from the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit, a second mode in which the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit are reduced by thinning out the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit according to a predetermined rule, and a third mode in which the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit are not reduced more than in the first and second modes.

2. An image pickup apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the image pickup mode to be set for picking up a moving image differs from the image pickup mode to be set for picking up a still image.

3. An image pickup apparatus according to claim 2,

wherein said third mode is set for picking up a still image.

4.   An image pickup apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the image pickup mode is set according to an object an image of which is to be picked up.

5.   An image pickup apparatus according to claim 1, wherein said setting controller sets the image pickup mode on the basis of evaluation values obtained from at least two distance measuring points.

6.   An image processing system having a plurality of apparatuses communicatively interconnected, wherein at least one of said plurality of apparatuses has a function of an image pickup apparatus according to claim 1.

7.   An image pickup apparatus, comprising:
    an image pickup circuit which photoelectrically converts, into pixel signals, a light image formed through a lens; and
    a controller which performs control in such a way as to change, according to an object an image of which is to be picked up, a method of reducing the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit.

8.   An image pickup apparatus according to claim 7, wherein said lens is a zoom lens, and said controller

controls said zoom lens according to the method of
reducing the pixel signals.

9. An image pickup apparatus according to claim 7,
wherein a photo-taking angle of view is compensated even
when the method of reducing the pixel signals is changed.

10. An image pickup apparatus according to claim 7,
wherein the method of reducing the pixel signals includes
at least a first mode in which the pixel signals obtained
by said image pickup circuit are reduced by extracting
pixel signals of a predetermined continuous area from the
pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit, and
a second mode in which the pixel signals obtained by said
image pickup circuit are reduced by thinning out the
pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit
according to a predetermined rule.

11. An image pickup apparatus according to claim 7,
wherein said controller changes the method of reducing
the pixel signals on the basis of evaluation values
obtained from at least two distance measuring points.

12. An image processing system having a plurality
of apparatuses communicatively interconnected, wherein at
least one of said plurality of apparatuses has a function
of an image pickup apparatus according to claim 7.

13. An image pickup method, comprising:

a photoelectric conversion step of photoelectrically converting, by an image pickup circuit, into pixel signals, a light image formed through a lens; and

a setting step of setting an image pickup mode selected from among a plurality of image pickup modes,

said plurality of image pickup modes including at least a first mode in which the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit are reduced by extracting pixel signals of a predetermined continuous area from the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit, a second mode in which the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit are reduced by thinning out the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit according to a predetermined rule, and a third mode in which the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit are not reduced more than in the first and second modes.

14. An image pickup method according to claim 13, wherein, in said setting step, the image pickup mode to be set for picking up a moving image differs from the image pickup mode to be set for picking up a still image.

15. An image pickup method according to claim 13, wherein said third mode is set for picking up a still image.

16. An image pickup method according to claim 13, wherein the image pickup mode is set according to an object an image of which is to be picked up.

17. An image pickup method according to claim 13, wherein, in said setting step, the image pickup mode is set on the basis of evaluation values obtained from at least two distance measuring points.

18. An image pickup method, comprising

a photoelectric conversion step of photoelectrically converting, by an image pickup circuit, into pixel signals, a light image formed through a lens; and

a control step of performing control in such a way as to change, according to an object an image of which is to be picked up, a method of reducing the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit.

19. An image pickup method according to claim 18, wherein said lens is a zoom lens, and, in said control step, said zoom lens is controlled according to the method of reducing the pixel signals.

20. An image pickup method according to claim 18, wherein, in said control step, a photo-taking angle of view is compensated even when the method of reducing the pixel signals is changed.

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21. An image pickup method according to claim 18, wherein the method of reducing the pixel signals includes at least a first mode in which the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit are reduced by extracting pixel signals of a predetermined continuous area from the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit, and a second mode in which the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit are reduced by thinning out the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit according to a predetermined rule.

22. An image pickup method according to claim 18, wherein, in said control step, the method of reducing the pixel signals is changed on the basis of evaluation values obtained from at least two distance measuring points.

23. A storage medium which stores therein, in a computer-readable manner, a processing program for executing a function of an image pickup apparatus having a photoelectric conversion circuit which photoelectrically converts, by an image pickup circuit, into pixel signals, a light image formed through a lens,

said processing program having a setting code for setting an image pickup mode selected from among a plurality of image pickup modes,

said plurality of image pickup modes including at least a first mode in which the pixel signals obtained

by said image pickup circuit are reduced by extracting pixel signals of a predetermined continuous area from the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit, a second mode in which the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit are reduced by thinning out the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit according to a predetermined rule, and a third mode in which the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit are not reduced more than in the first and second modes.

24. A storage medium which stores therein, in a computer-readable manner, a processing program for executing a function of an image pickup apparatus having a photoelectric conversion circuit which photoelectrically converts, by an image pickup circuit, into pixel signals, a light image formed through a lens,

said processing program having a control code for performing control in such a way as to change, according to an object an image of which is to be picked up, a method of reducing the pixel signals obtained by said image pickup circuit.